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A GERMAN VIEW OF "WOMAN'S SPHERE."

DILETTANTISM in the kitchen and a sentimental regard for the traditional hearthstone must be met by co-operation and a consciousness of the historical development of the family. The German student of domestic problems, Lily Braun, has recently discussed them under the title, "Woman's Work and Domestic Economy." Her intensity reminds one of Charlotte Perkins Stetson, but she is far less radical, although it might be expected that German conditions would result in a greater reaction.

The author's insistence upon a decided change in modern methods of housekeeping is based upon her belief that:

> The external form of the family has constantly varied.[1] The enduring element, in spite of the variation, has been the relations between man, wife, and child. Its depth and significance have developed in proportion as it has been freed from external conditions. "This freedom from hampering material circumstances does not mean, in the least, the dissolution of the family; it means, rather, the possibility of true family life." Lily Braun agrees tacitly with Mrs. Stetson that a "family unity which is only bound together with a tablecloth is of questionable value."

In tracing the history of woman's work, the author says:

> Housekeeping (die Hauswirtschaft), as one commonly regards it, is the most conservative element in social life. It seems to be the rock about which the waves of scientific development and commotion rage, without breaking off more than a few bits. Yet, in reality, it is the mirror which reflects all the pictures of the outer world and throws light upon the history of civilization.

In pre-historic times when man received out of the lightning the precious fire and realized its significance he established the first hearth and made woman the guardian of the flame. While, in course of time, the hearth has been supplanted by the central heating system and the hundred and one hearthstone activities become specialized, the hearthstone idea has become so incorporated in the social creed that to disagree with those who believe the individual cook-stove is as necessary as the individual conscience, is to be accused of social heresy. The author's method of treatment shows her to be fully aware of her audience. She makes very plain the gradual growth of home industries to their culminating point in feudal times, and then

[1] *Frauenarbeit und Hauswirthschaft.* By LILY BRAUN. Berlin: Vorwärts, 1901. 12mo, pp. 31.

follows their gradual displacement up to the present, when cooking alone remains largely an individual occupation, and spinning, weaving, sewing, soap and candle making have all become developed and put outside — or taken outside — the home.

Among the poorer classes this specialization meant almost a complete destruction of the home in which the first looms crowded out the possibilities of family life apart from continued toil for the means of existence. Today, excepting in the "sweating" industries, the factories have done away with this crowding but the homes have not rallied; they are but temporary sleeping and eating places. "Deserted stands many a home of the poor; the little flame on the hearth — upon which will be heated the meal prepared the night before, when the man and his wife come back for a short rest at noon — recalls still the hearth fire of former times.".

In the houses of the rich little is done beyond personal service and cooking. And as a result of this change in woman's occupations in the home girls and women are free to undertake other work. Those who can afford this leisure betake themselves to idle pleasures or the arts, but the women of the poor must follow the machine into the factory.

It is, then, in this extension of domestic work that the position of the workingwoman becomes anomalous. She is forced into the struggle for existence alongside of man, but she is still supposed to fulfill her woman's function in the home as housekeeper and mother. Therefore, she becomes less than man's industrial equal because of dissipated energies in the two fields, and she becomes his greatest enemy. The increase in the number of married women in industry is added proof that the wheel still turns which was set in motion little more than a century ago. In 1895, 16 per cent. of the workingwomen in Germany were married; in Austria 24 per cent.; and in France 30 per cent.

The author brings out the effect of this factory life upon the lives of the children; the weakest come to bear the heaviest burden. "The more children a working woman has, the more her presence is needed at home, just so much greater is the need which forces her out to work."

The position of the middle class woman is not much easier if they feel the necessity of entering any of the professions. They must still be compelled to be housekeepers, even though they have a servant. The constant distraction of the mind by the petty details of meals,

sewing, and sweeping is sufficient to render impossible any coherent scientific work. Here, again, there is a dissipation of energy, mental energy.

Frau Braun does not lay as much emphasis as she might upon the great loss to society which results from the modern domestic arrangement, a loss to the present through lack of organization, and a loss to the future through the effect upon health of mind and body. Yet, as a socialist, she necessarily realizes the bearing of this question upon the fundamental ones of social and industrial readjustment. She proposes a plan for co-operative housekeeping which is not at all novel upon this side of the water. The points of advantage for the working class are most evident where the care of children is concerned. Trained nurses, as well as trained cooks, would be regarded essential in her plan. In a large apartment house built for co-operative housekeeping the privacy of the family would still be maintained in spite of the disappearance of the private kitchen. Meals, cooked in the central kitchen, could be eaten in the common dining-room or taken to the apartments of those who preferred their own dining-rooms.

The means for undertaking such an establishment is discussed with a recognition of the present dependence of labor upon capital. The author suggests building and loan associations or interested capitalists willing to take the risk of investment.

The results of such a change are evident. When at home, working mothers would have time to devote to their husbands and children and to the cultivation of their minds and bodies. Frau Braun quotes Krapotkin:

> The emancipation of woman does not mean the opening to her of the doors of the universities, courts, and parliaments; it means much more the freeing of woman from cook-stove and wash-tub and the establishing of a system which will allow her to educate her children and take part in the social life.

The student of social evolution knows that the small kitchen must go as did the small work-shop. This study from the German point of view has in it little that is original, but much which will bear repetition from now till the time when sentimentality gives way to necessity and the vitality of the word "home" does not depend so much upon the material surroundings of a family as upon the consciousness of a deep and significant relationship, eternally the same no matter how outer forms change.

CHARLOTTE TELLER.